

There's more to do. Small-business owners across America fear that one junk lawsuit could force them to close their doors for good. Medical liability lawsuits are driving up the cost for doctors and patients and entrepreneurs around the country. Asbestos litigation alone has led to the bankruptcy of dozens of companies and cost tens of thousands of jobs, even though many asbestos claims are filed on behalf of people who aren't actually sick.

Overall, junk lawsuits have driven the total cost of America's tort system to more than \$240 billion a year, greater than any other major industrialized nation. It creates a needless disadvantage for America's workers and businesses in a global economy, imposes unfair costs on job creators, and raises prices to consumers.

We have a responsibility to confront frivolous litigation head on. I will continue working with Congress to pass meaningful legal reforms, starting with reform in our asbestos and medical liability systems.

Once again, I want to thank you all for the hard work on this important legislation. Class-action reform will help keep America the best place in the world to do business. It will help ensure justice for our citizens, and I'm confident that this bill will be the first of many bipartisan achievements in the year 2005.

And now it is my honor to sign the Class-Action Fairness law.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:37 a.m. in the East Room at the White House. S. 5, approved February 18, was assigned Public Law No. 109-2.

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### **Digest of Other White House Announcements**

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The following list includes the President's public schedule and other items of general interest announced by the Office of the Press Secretary and not included elsewhere in this issue.

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#### **February 12**

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

#### **February 14**

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing and met with the National Security Council. Later, he had a telephone conversation with Crown Prince Abdullah of Saudi Arabia to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the meeting between former President Franklin D. Roosevelt and King Abdulaziz of Saudi Arabia and to discuss elections in Saudi Arabia and counterterrorism efforts.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with outgoing Administrator Sean O'Keefe of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration to thank him for his service.

The President announced his intention to nominate Lester M. Crawford to be Commissioner of Food and Drugs at the Department of Health and Human Services.

#### **February 15**

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

The White House announced that the President and Mrs. Bush will host King Harald V and Queen Sonja of Norway for lunch at the White House on March 7.

The President declared a major disaster in Ohio and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe winter storms, flooding, and mudslides on December 22, 2004, through February 1, 2005.

#### **February 16**

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, in the Oval Office, he had breakfast with congressional leaders.

Later in the morning, the President traveled to Portsmouth, NH, where, upon arrival, he met with USA Freedom Corps volunteer Reggie Wright.

In the afternoon, the President returned to Washington, DC.

#### **February 17**

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

During the day, in the Oval Office, the President and Mrs. Bush met with Paul Rusesabagina, whose actions to shelter refugees during the 1994 Rwanda genocide were depicted in the film "Hotel Rwanda," and his wife, Tatiana Rusesabagina.

### **February 18**

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

The President announced his intention to nominate Jonathan Brian Perlin to be Under Secretary for Health at the Department of Veterans Affairs.

The President announced his intention to appoint Becky Norton Dunlop (Chairman) and Richard Barber Ainsworth, Jr., as members of the Federal Service Impasses Panel.

The President announced his intention to designate Raymond F. DuBois as Acting Under Secretary of the Army.

The President announced his intention to designate Peter F. Allgeier as Acting U.S. Trade Representative.

The President declared a major disaster in Arizona and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe storms and flooding on December 28, 2004, through January 12, 2005.

The President declared an emergency in Nevada and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by record and/or near record snow on December 29, 2004, through January 2, 2005.

The President declared an emergency in Connecticut and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by record snow on January 22–23.

The President declared an emergency in Massachusetts and ordered Federal aid to supplement Commonwealth and local recovery efforts in the area struck by record and/or near record snow on January 22–23.

The President declared an emergency in Rhode Island and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by record snow on January 22–23.

The President declared a major disaster in American Samoa and ordered Federal aid to

supplement Territory and local recovery efforts in the area struck by Tropical Cyclone Olaf, including high winds, high surf, and heavy rainfall, beginning on February 15 and continuing.

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### **Nominations Submitted to the Senate**

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The following list does not include promotions of members of the Uniformed Services, nominations to the Service Academies, or nominations of Foreign Service officers.

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### **Submitted February 14**

John B. Bellinger III,  
of Virginia, to be Legal Adviser of the Department of State, vice William Howard Taft IV.

R. Nicholas Burns,  
of Massachusetts, to be an Under Secretary of State (Political Affairs), vice Marc Isaiah Grossman, resigned.

C. David Welch,  
of Virginia, to be an Assistant Secretary of State (Near Eastern Affairs), vice William J. Burns.

Terrence W. Boyle,  
of North Carolina, to be U.S. Circuit Judge for the Fourth Circuit, vice J. Dickson Phillips, Jr., retired.

Janice R. Brown,  
of California, to be U.S. Circuit Judge for the District of Columbia Circuit, vice Stephen F. Williams, retired.

Richard A. Griffin,  
of Michigan, to be U.S. Circuit Judge for the Sixth Circuit, vice Damon J. Keith, retired.

Thomas B. Griffith,  
of Utah, to be U.S. Circuit Judge for the District of Columbia Circuit, vice Patricia M. Wald, retired.